

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-04 NEA-06 ISO-00 IO-10 SAM-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

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R 201420Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 712

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 7982

E.O. 11652GDS

TAGS: PBOR, SS, SP, MO, UN, MR

SUBJECT: SAHARA ROUND-UP

REF MADRID 6975

1. SUMMARY. PRESS REPORTS ARMED CLASH DEC 18-19 BETWEEN SPANISH FORCES AND ARMED INSURGENTS NEAR MAURITANIAN BORDER HAS LEFT 11 DEAD AND FIFTEEN WOUNDED. AT SAME TIME, SPANISH ARMY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER WHO RECENTLY RETURNED FROM SAHARA FACT-FINDING CLAIMS NEAR COMPLETE ABSENCE OF ANTI-SPANISH OR PRO-MOROCCAN FEELING AMONG SAHARAN POPULATION AND DENIES MOROCCAN REPORTS OF FURTHER INCIDENTS OF SABOTAGE SINCE PHOSPAHTE CONVEYOR BELT DISABLED IN OCTOBER. FOREIGN MINISTER AGAIN PLEDGED DURING REPORT OF CORTES THAT SPAIN WOULD RESPECT SAHARAN'S RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION, SAHARAN DLELGATE IN CORTES SUBSEQUENTLY MADE STATEMENT REAFFIRMING THAT MOROCCO HAS NO HISTORICAL CLAIM TO SHARAH AND THAT DECISION ON REFERENDUM, INCLUDING TIMING, CONFIDENTIAL

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IS SOLE COMPTENCE OF SAHARANS. END SUMMARY.

2. SPANISH NEWS AGENCIES IN EL AAIUN REPORT THAT ARMED CLASH ON DEC 18-19 BETWEEN SAHARAN TERRITORIAL POLICE, SUBSEQUENTLY AIDED BY SPANISH LEGION UNITS, AND GROUP OF SOME 15 INSURGENTS HAS LEFT 11 DEAD AND 15 WOUNDED. CLASH OCCURRED NEAR TIFARITI CLOSE TO MAURITANIAN FRONTIER WHEN TERRITORIAL POLICE UNIT ON RECONNAISSANCE MISSION AMBUSHED BY INSURGENTS. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, SAHARAN POLICE CASUALTIES WERE FOUR DEAD AND NINE WOUNDED, INCLUDING ONE EUROPEAN. SPANISH LEGION UNIT HAD ONE DEAD AND TWO WOUNDED. INSURGENTS LEFT BEHIND SIX DEAD AND THREE WOUNDED. INSURGENTS REPORTED TO BE PART OF LARGER GROUP OF ABOUT 30 OPERATING IN AREA.

3. CHIEF OF INTELLIGENCE, SPANISH ARMY STAFF, MAJ. GENERAL RAFAEL GUIMEA, WHO DURING PAST MONTH MADE FAMILIARIZATION VISIT TO SAHARA, TOLD EMBOFF THAT, CONTRARY TO MOROCCAN CLAIMS, HE AWARE OF NO FURTHER INCIDENTS OF SABOTAGE SINCE OCT 20 ATTEMPT ON PHOSPHATE CONVEYOR BELT. HE ALSO NOTED THAT MOROCCANS HAD BEEN CLAIMING THAT DISTURBANCES HAD OCCURRED RECENTLY IN EL AAIUN, BUT HE WAS AWARE ONLY OF DISTRIBUTION OF LEAFLETS BY SOME SAHARAN YOUTHS AND SMALL DEMONSTRATION BY SAHARAN WOMEN IN EL AAIUN, BOTH OF WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS UNIMPORTANT.

4. GUIMERA SAID HE RETURNED MORE STRONGLY CONVINCED THAT ALL BUT TINY MINORITY OF SAHARANS PREFER SOME FORM OF CONTINUED ASSOCIATION WITH SPAIN AND WANT NOTHING TO DO WITH EITHER MOROCCO OR MAURITANIA. IN THIS POLITICAL CLIMATE, HE CONCLUDED, DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNAL AND GENUINELY INDIGENOUS SAHARAN INSURGENCY MOVEMENT IS MOST IMPROBABLE. HE CONSIDERED IT SIGNIFICANT THAT SPANISH OFFICERS ON ROUTINE PATROLS, EVEN IN SUPPOSEDLY TROUBLED NORTHERN BORDER AREA OF SAHARA, DON'T EVEN CARRY ARMS BECAUSE AREA IS SO TRANQUIL. GUIMERA NOTED IN PASSING THAT MILITARY GOVERNOR GENERAL OF SAHARA, IN BRIEFING HIM, HAD AGAIN STRESSED HIS FIRM CONVICTION THAT MOROCCAN OR MAURITANIAN LINKS WOULD BE REJECTED

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OVERWHELMINGLY IN ANY FAIR REFERENDUM, EVEN BY SAHARAN VOTERS NOW LIVING IN NEIGHBORING STATES.

5. FOREIGN MINISTER CORTINA MAURI GAVE EXTENSIVE REPORT ON SPANISH FOREIGN POLICY AT CLOSED SESSION FOREIGN RELATION COMMISSION OF CORTES DEC 17. SKETCHY OFFICIAL RELEASE OF CORTINA STATEMENT REPORTED ONLY THAT HE HAD CONFIRMED GOS DETERMINATION TO RESPECT

RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION OF SAHARANS IN ACCORDANCE WITH UN RESOLUTIONS AND TO MAKE SPAIN'S CASE AT ICJ. CORTES MEMBER WHO ATTENDED CLOSED SESSION SAID CORTINA HAD BEEN "PESSIMISTIC" ON POSSIBILITY OF SATISFACTORY RESOLUTION OF SAHARA DISPUTE.

6. AT SUBSEQUENT PRESS CONFERENCE IN MADRID, ONE OF SAHARAN DELEGATES TO CORTES, AHMED ULD BACHIR ULD BRAHIM, SAID SAHARANS ARE ONLY "OWNERS" OF THEIR TERRITORY AND THAT UN DELIBERATES WITHOUT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT SAHARAN OPINION. HE AFFIRMED THAT MOROCCO COULD PRESENT NO PROOFS OF ITS SOVEREIGNTY CLAIMS, ADDING THAT WHEN EUROPEAN COLONIAL POWERS DIVIDED UP AFRICA IN 19TH CENTURY SAHARA BELONGED ONLY TO SAHARANS, WHO HAD NO ALLEGIANCE TO MOROCCO. COMMENTING ON POSSIBLE POSTPONEMENT OF REFERENDUM IN LINE WITH LATEST UN RESOLUTION, ULD BRAHIM RECALLED THAT SAHARAN ASSEMBLY HAD ASKED FOR REFERENDUM AND WOULD HAVE TO ACT ON PROPOSAL "OF ITS OWN FREE WILL". ADDED THAT ONLY SAHARANS--NOT OUTSIDERS--COMPETENT TO DECIDE WHEN REFERENDUM SHOULD BE HELD.

7. COMMENT: PRESUMABLY TRANQUILITY OBSERVED BY INTELLIGENCE CHIEF INTENDED TO APPLY CHIEFLY IN CASE OF INDIGENOUS SAHARANS, PARTICULARLY TO THOS LIVING AWAY FROM BORDER AREAS. HIS COMMENTS ON FEELING OF SECURITY DISPLAYED BY SPANISH PATROL LEADERS REMARKABLE IN LIGHT OF RECENT INCIDENTS. DEC 18 CLASH IS THIRD IN RECENT WEEKS INVOLVING SPANISH OR LOYAL SAHARAN FORCES AT OR NEAR BORDERS WHICH HAS RESULTED IN LOSS OF LIFE.

8. STATEMENT OF SHARAN DELEGATE REINFORCES POSITION
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TAKEN SO FAR BY GOS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF ICJ REFERRAL RESOLUTION TO EFFECT THAT IT NOT FOR SPAIN ALONE TO DECIDE WHETHER REFERENDUM SHOULD BE POSTPONED AND THAT CAREFUL CONSULTATIONS WITH SAHARAN ASSEMBLY WOULD BE NECESSARY. REPORTEDLY THOS CONSULTATIONS NOW UNDERWAY BUT WITH NO INDICATION SO FAR OF THEIR OUTCOME. PREVAILING COMMENT IN SPANISH PRESS AND UNOFFICIAL COMMENT AMONG EMBASSY CONTACTS IN MFA AND MILITARY IS THAT SPAIN HAS FIRM, STILL VALID UN MANDATE TO CONDUCT REFERENDUM, THAT IT HAS DULY INFORMED UN OF PLANS. AND THAT IT HAS OBLIGATION TO SAHARANS TO PROCEED AS PLANNED. END COMMENT.
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